

MEMORIES



The Rev. J. P. STRUTHERS

**PRICE ONE SHILLING.
(NET.)**

M E M O R I E S
OF THE
REV. JOHN PATERSON STRUTHERS
ALONG WITH
EXTRACTS FROM "THE MORNING WATCH"

By A. O. F.
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M E M O R I E S
OF THE
REV. JOHN PATERSON STRUTHERS

The following inscription appears on the Memorial Tablet which has been erected on the outside wall of the Reformed Presbyterian Church:—

“IN MEMORIAM

REV. J. P. STRUTHERS, M.A.

Minister of Reformed Presbyterian Church, Greenock, 1882-1915.

FOR HE WAS A GOOD MAN— Acts, II, 24.”

FOREWORD.

John Paterson Struthers was born on April 8, 1851, in Glasgow. After a brilliant career at Glasgow University and a tour round the world with a party of friends he settled down to his life's work. He had but two charges, that of Whithorn and finally Greenock. His life was spent in quiet and wonderful work and those who knew Mr Struthers knew a good man. He died on January 18, 1915.

These reminiscences and personal impressions of the late Rev. J. P. Struthers are given with all diffidence. It is no attempt at a biography, nor even a history of his work in Greenock. They are merely rambling notes as the writer remembers the man, and had it not been urged that many would welcome such a paper as this, it would never have been written. There may be many members of his congregation who could speak fuller and better of him as a preacher, but they were privileged as the writer had his own Sunday duties to attend to. As these notes are a tribute of love and esteem, it may be that their inadequateness for this reason will be pardoned. Mr Struthers was a big man, and most men were fortunate if they came near his shoulders.

THE MAN.

So large do some men loom in public life that often they seem far more than mere men. Of course, in the first place, they are men and all that that means in the best acceptation of the word, but, over and above that, they are living institutions in which the people bank their faith in human kind. It is to such men as these to whom the community turns in any time of stress for guidance and opinion, for there is no doubt that the animal man (in the majority) prefers to have his opinions made without bother and to be shown the proper path when there may be dubiety. And so man is, gregarious in all things as a rule, but it is the exception that proves it, and these isolated exceptions invariably merit the regard in which they are held.

Pre-eminent amongst those who did not drift with the crowd was the Rev. J. P. Struthers, whose death, at the age of sixty-three years, was regretted, not merely by his congregation and the citizens of Greenock, but by all those who had the honour of his friendship.

Isolated to a large extent was Mr Struthers in the denomination to which he belonged, for the Reformed Presbyterian Church in which he preached was unique in Greenock, and altogether there are not so very many congregations of this Church in the whole of Scotland. As is well known, it is the relic of the Covenanters, grim, brave men who defied King and State and carried on their worship in their own way amidst the rushing of mountain streams and the cry of the wild fowl on some lonely moor. These were the men who fought Montrose under the Earl of Argyll, who were defeated, but persevered in their dour way and triumphed, sealed the doom of Charles I. more than did Cromwell, and who made it possible for Charles II. to regain the

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

throne of his fathers. But they often suffered persecutions, and the story of the martyrs of the Solway is one that will never be forgotten. Mr Struthers was proud of such a heritage, and his "Morning Watch"—of which more anon—gave ample evidence from time to time of his great fund of information on this subject.

A CRICKETING STORY.

The members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church are usually accredited with the strictest of ideas regarding the Sabbath, and certainly the folks of a previous generation observed the Fourth Commandment in the letter as well as in the spirit. Having travelled extensively and rubbed shoulders with all sorts and conditions of people, the late Mr Struthers was perhaps a little in advance of his people in this respect, and this point of view sometimes brought him into conflict with his elders. Let us lead up to the story that will illustrate this—a story that will be new to most. Although not given strenuously to athletics, he was a man who loved the out-door life, and being a cricket enthusiast he was prone to wander into Glen Park of an evening, stick his umbrella into the grass, and watch the practice at the nets. And he gloated when he had the chance of running after a ball and throwing it to the bowler. At the cricket matches on the Saturdays he was also a familiar figure. Well, one Sunday morning, he was chatting with one of his elders before entering the pulpit, and knowing that he (the decent man is now dead and gone) took an interest in cricket, Mr Struthers asked—"How many did Billy Simpson score yesterday afternoon."

THE CHURCH.

Now the said Billy Simpson was a member of Mr Struthers' Church—a working blacksmith by trade—one of the batters of the 1st XI., and one of the most popular members of the team. Billy was a gentleman, but that by the way. When Mr Struthers had asked that Sunday morning how many Billy had scored in the Saturday's match, the good old elder was shocked. Like the

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

Laird of Cockpen, he was dumfounded that his minister should ask such a profane question. When he recovered from his surprise he solemnly said,

"Mr Struthers, I think that is not a question to be asked in church on a Sunday morning."

Mr Struthers never argued the merits of the point; great men never argue, he merely said, "Oh, yes," in his own quiet way, and there the incident ended.

Let us now follow Mr Struthers into his church, not into his pulpit, for the minister is not born who will be able to adequately fill the great void that the death of Mr Struthers has caused. But let us enter with the people and take a back seat and learn from Mr Struthers the great truths that he so earnestly set forth. So severe in its simplicity was the order of worship that to the quiet observer it instantly recalled the days when the congregations worshipped on the hillsides, with sentinels duly posted in order that the people might have a chance to flee when the soldiers were sighted. In the days when the people worshipped in the church in West Stewart Street, at the corner of Argyle Street, the beadle used to bring up "The Books" from the vestry and then shut the pulpit door after the minister, but in the new church further west even this simple ceremony was done away with. By the way, in one of the last sermons Mr Struthers ever preached in his old church, he remarked that he did not know what would be built on the site of the church in which they had worshipped so long, but he prayed that it would not be a theatre. And yet, by a strange coincidence, a proper theatre was very nearly there erected, while, as it is, the site of the old church is covered by a picture palace. Such is the irony of fate.

But we are a long way from Mr Struthers beautiful little church in West Stewart Street, which was really built entirely by his efforts and opened free of debt. This also he was proud of, and the fact of the freedom from debt was duly announced at the first service.

Mr Struthers was always punctual, and almost as soon as the hour of eleven had chimed from some neighbouring steeple, the

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

door leading from the vestry opened, and it might almost be said that he slipped into the pulpit, so quietly did he walk.

There were many surprises to the stranger in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the first of these was that Mr Struthers never wore a gown. For what reason it has never been exactly stated, but probably because it savoured of high church and a want of simplicity, and simplicity in all things was one of the characteristics of his life. Not, be it noted, the simplicity of the child, but the direct honesty of the strong man who knew that he gained strength in scorning the very things that others believed in. Thus we have Mr Struthers in his black frock coat—which was always tightly buttoned—the little white tie that was tucked under his collar, holding up his hand for prayer at the commencement of his service as if the congregation had been there always.

“LET US PRAY.”

There are many ministers who never forget to say “Let us begin the public worship of God” every Sunday morning, but many will remember Mr Struthers’ explaining away with this as a pleonasm, although he used a far simpler word, by stating that the public worship of God was begun long ago. In his prayers he was earnest and direct, and he often told the story that illustrated this aspect in the case of one of the well-known Bonars. One of the few times that he had attended Dr Bonar’s services, that reverend gentleman had begun one of his prayers with the words, “Oh, Lord, I saw in the ‘Glasgow Herald’ yesterday morning——” And it was the direct simplicity and honesty of this he so much admired. And another of the surprises to the stranger in the church was that the congregation stood at prayer and sat for the singing of the psalms—there were no paraphrases or hymns—facts again reminiscent of the days when the old Covenanters sat on the hills and listened to the Word of God.

ALWAYS A PREACHER.

Mr Struthers was perhaps unique amongst ministers from the

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

fact that at one time he never read his sermons, although latterly he occasionally had a manuscript with him at the afternoon service. And what he preached was plain salvation, the simple gospel in simple words, but illustrated with how great a wealth of simile and story! From his rich fund of information gained through travel and reading, the listener never wearied, even if he preached for close on sixty minutes, as was at one time his custom. Mr Struthers preached the story of Jesus and His love as few of us can, and many must be glad that they heard Mr Struthers. Both in his prayers and in his sermons he was ever specially mindful of the little children and the young folk, and one of his favourite phrases just before the sermon was finished was (this is quoted from memory)—“And now, one last word to you whom are parents. Train up your children in the fear and in the admonition of the Lord. Learn them to be obedient, and teach them that it is right to go to church—not as a duty, but as a privilege and a pleasure. And . . .” But we fear to quote longer further from a memory the years are already beginning to play havoc with.

A SWEEPING STATEMENT.

There was one sin that Mr Struthers could not say enough against. One sin for which he seemed unable to find language strong enough. One sin that made him impassioned even in the pulpit, and that was the sin of drunkenness. At the Fair and the New-year he was certain to give a homily on the terrible effects of drink and the sinfulness of abusing the bodies that God gave us. It was a subject on which he could not say enough to warn people against the evils of strong drink. It may be remembered that at the time it was proposed to re-open the public-houses on the Fair Saturday, after they had been closed by order of the Magistrates for some years, there was a meeting of protest in the Town Hall. At this meeting of the citizens Mr Struthers was present, and, regarding the action of a section of the Magistrates who favoured the proposal, publicly stated that for proposing to open the public-houses on the Fair Saturday, and so provide more facilities for drinking, “that God would condemn their souls for

ever." It is certainly a sweeping statement, but it showed his attitude regarding the great drink problem.

COINCIDENCES.

While Mr Struthers had a strong personality, it was never an obtrusive one. He was never in the habit of everlastingly writing "Letters to the Editor," but his opinions were at all times given freely and fearlessly if the need arose. When he was billed to speak in the Town Hall, there was ever a large audience, and he never failed to win by his strenuous earnestness and his winsome humour. But it was in his own Church Hall that he gave those delightful lectures that have been quoted all over Greenock. His description of "Life in Scotland 100 Years ago" gave an intimate picture of twenty-four hours in the life of our forefathers, but it was in "Coincidences" that he gained most fame. "Coincidences" was the title of a lecture that Mr Struthers gave for many years, and although the title never varied the coincidences did, and it was ever delightful to hear him on this subject. And his illustrations were both grave and gay, and as wide as the poles asunder. Let us quote one or two.

Mr Struthers tells the story of how he was once travelling in the train to Glasgow, and an argument arose between two men as to how to spell separate. One insisted that it was seperate and the other was for the "a." At length there was a bet of £1 arranged as to the correct method of spelling the word, the bet to be settled by consultation with a dictionary in Glasgow. But, curiously enough, at Paisley, a man came into the carriage with Johnson's Dictionary under his arm, and naturally was eagerly welcomed by both disputants. They told their story, and the man thereupon referred to separate. By all that was wonderful, it was spelled seperate, and so the "a" man lost his bet. But that, said Mr Struthers, with a twinkle in his eye, was not a coincidence. Mr Struthers had the knack of telling the funniest of incidents with nothing more than a little smile, and when his audience would be sore with laughing he was solemn as the proverbial judge. And

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

how his hearers laughed when he observed that if a young man and woman met each other regularly at a certain hour on the Lyle Road, that such a meeting would not be a coincidence !

But of those who went down to the sea in ships he had many tragic coincidences to relate. As may be known, Mr Struthers lived all his life in Greenock on the Esplanade, and he knew all about the ships that passed the window of his house, and his coincidences in this connection would make quite a volume. He was ever eager for a chat with a sailor, and many a time have we heard him getting an interesting yarn from some old salt that by and by would find its way into the "Morning Watch." Even in an old issue of the "Watch" there was a coincidence of the sea, which illustrated how often his thoughts ran on this subject. "Those who go down to the sea in ships, these see the marvels of the Lord," seemed to be one of the reasons that this study was to him so fascinating.

HIS GREAT GENIUS.

It is not difficult to write of Mr Struthers and his life in Greenock, for those who knew him well were privileged to listen to many little homilies on all things both great and small, quaint little pieces of humour ; curious odds and ends of information illustrative of his wide reading ; and many wise sayings on great questions.

And of his travels round the world in his young days, what a rare fund of interesting information he had to draw upon ! He seemed to have kept a mental diary of those days that was as easy of reference to him as was the Bible. Travelling aboard ship on one occasion, he told how a party of swells would have nothing to do with him and his friends, but they didn't mind, for they were young and happy. At table, the swells were proper but dull, but, said Mr Struthers, they were glad to eat of the crumbs of conversation that fell from our table, for frequently we heard them discussing the tags of our conversation. And that is readily understood.

READING THE BIBLE.

It is perhaps a pity that none of his friends ever displayed the Boswellian habit of making notes of his sayings, for then certainly there would have been a book that would have been well worth reading and buying. But who amongst us believed that his life's work should be done at the early age of sixty-four? As Mr Struthers was a man who practised what he preached, it is worth while re-telling that story of his from one of the early numbers of 'The Morning Watch' regarding the proper number of verses one should read each day from the Bible.

"When I was a boy I was taught to read a chapter every morning and every evening, and I am ashamed to say that I very often read the 117th Psalm. It has only two verses, but it counted as a chapter, all the same! Now, there is no special virtue in reading more nor less than a chapter. I think it a good plan to read a verse for every year you have lived. If you are six, read six; if you are twelve, read twelve. Some day you will be so interested that you will read far more, and by God's blessing, when you grow up you will often read a great many chapters, maybe a whole book, without stopping."

Only sixty-four verses. In this short quotation the direct simplicity of the language is a striking feature and the same fact constantly predominates his magazine. He never used big words. Mr Struthers once told his congregation to read carefully any passage from the Pilgrim's Progress, and then set it down in their own language. And their own feeble efforts, he said, would help them to realise more than anything else the immense majesty of Bunyan's story.

ONE SUNDAY MORNING.

As has been said, it is easy to write of Mr Struthers, but the difficulty is in making a selection from the chambers of the mind of all the memories that there are stored of him. Sometimes we were fortunate enough to meet him on the Sabbath morning on the

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

road to church, and passing Bagatelle on the first Sabbath in March he would listen to the crows building their nests in the rookery there, and pointed out that God never let the birds forget. And of the ways of birds and of all manner of animals he had a wonderful knowledge, and this we see exemplified in many of his charming stories in the "Watch." Meeting two gentlemen one Sabbath morning he paused and chatted with them for a few minutes, then as he was turning away, he said: "May you have a very happy Sabbath, gentlemen." An original and kindly blessing. Although a great kindness at all times pervaded Mr Struthers for little children, his friends and many a wayward sinner, he certainly had strong dislikes. As an instance of this, let us recall the day we entered a tramway car with Mr Struthers (some years ago now), and a certain public man alighted therefrom. Sitting next to Mr Struthers in that car, he almost hissed into our ear, so strong was the contempt in his voice, that the public man who had left that car was "the most blatant fool in Greenock." And he was right!

PROUD OF HIS MODESTY.

But love predominated. Many a message boy and many a message girl, as we all know, have been helped by Mr Struthers to carry a too-heavy basket or even to push a barrow up a hill. Just a few weeks before he died he was seen behind a barrow in the higher part of Madeira Street, a lonely street at the busiest, and surely no one would hint that that was done for vain-glory. It was his wonderful thoughtfulness that inspired such actions, which were as natural to him as to leave the lad alone would have been to most of us. Of course, it has been said that Mr Struthers was proud of his modesty, but even if that be a blemish (and we do not say it is), is it a boast that any of us can make with truth? It may have been for this reason that he refused to accept the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Glasgow University, for those who knew Mr Struthers also knew that there never was a man who more honestly merited the honour. It may have been quixotic, but at the same time it must be said that the reason why he did not take the honour was because he did believe that he was not worthy of it.

WITH THE YOUNG FOLKS.

But not only did Mr Struthers help message boys and girls with their loads, but he has been seen playing with boys at their own games. Once he was engaged with some little chaps in a sort of cricket game on the Esplanade, when a baker's van passed. He stopped the van, went up to the driver very solemnly and said: "Please don't tell the policeman that we are playing cricket here."

Another time when asked to help a little girl with an essay on Rosneath—and he must have had many such demands—he suggested right away that it might be said that there grew two large trees which, unlike our first parents, are still unfallen. Trivial little incidents if you will, but they help to show the love that he had for the young: "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Walking along the street one day Mr Struthers met a woman dragging a child along by the hand in an impatient and unmotherly manner. "Come along, you little devil," she said, giving the child's arm a jerk just as she was passing Mr Struthers. And the rebuke that he gave to that woman was one that was truly Mr Struthers' and efficient. Without a change on his face, he said, "May I have the pleasure of shaking hands with the little devil's mother "

Illustrative of the effective style he had for arresting the young may be told the story of how he once addressed the young girls attending the Belmont Home in West Stewart Street, just one of the many agencies for good to which Mr Struthers lent his aid. As may be well known, this home is managed for the benefit of working girls, and the ladies conducting it do all in their power to help these girls to become good housewives, to give them a love for home life, and to restrain them from indiscriminate wandering on the streets. It was, therefore, somewhat in the nature of a surprise to these ladies and a matter of delight to the girls when he one evening addressed them on the subject of matrimony—just the very thing that the ladies wanted the girls to forget for an evening. After a few casual remarks, he observed that the girls

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

there that evening were eagerly looking out for good husbands (tremendous but subdued interest in the audience). That was just as it should be, and then Mr Struthers said a few words showing the benefits of godly married people. But there was one thing far better than a good husband, he continued, and that was a good wife—and her price was beyond rubies. And then, with the interest of the girls fully aroused, he advised them all to take advantage of their teaching in that home so that when they came to be housewives they might know how to behave as God-fearing, loving, and capable wives. And after that sermon, Mr Struthers was more popular than ever at the Belmont Home for Girls.

GENIUS AND SIMPLICITY.

What a charm of character he had! What childlike simplicity and humility! What loftiness of soul! What a faculty of picturesque speech! What a genial humanity dwelt in him! What an overmastering sense of duty always constrained him! He commended to his people both the classical and the Christian graces; and he practised all the seven himself.

Our friend “was a scholar, and a ripe and good one.” Some men of genius are not scholars. But the career of John Struthers at the University was most distinguished, especially in the departments of classics and philosophy. He carried off medal after medal, and gained many prizes. All through his life, too, he continued to be a student. What a knowledge he had of history and biography! Every day he read books, and yet was never in danger of becoming a bookworm. For he also read nature, and men. He took a lively interest in out-of-door sports and pastimes, and had a keen eye for the craft which from the windows of his house he saw passing up and down the Clyde. He was among us through the years, “wearing all that weight of learning lightly like a flower.”

REFUSAL OF A GREAT HONOUR.

Although it seemed whimsical and almost quixotic, his declination of the honorary degree of D.D. from his Alma Mater

was really characteristic of the man. His humility was unfeigned, and he had an aversion to every form of self-display. In reply to a note of congratulation which the writer of this paper sent him on the forenoon of the day on which the purpose of the University appeared in the newspapers, Mr Struthers said that he had promptly declined the honour, as he did not consider himself to be worthy of it. He added these words :

"I feel as if the Emperor of China had given me a feather and a gold button. I am going to wear my old hat.—Yours most sincerely,
J. P. STRUTHERS."

TWO HUMOROUS INCIDENTS.

One of our brother's outstanding characteristics, already referred to, was his humour. Here are two specimens of it. A friend directed his attention one day to the fairly close resemblance that there is between the Epistle of Jude and 2nd Peter, chapter ii. The likeness is so remarkable as to suggest the inference that one of the writers borrowed from the other. Mr Struthers was asked, accordingly, whether there was in his mind any difficulty with regard to the inspiration of either of the authors. "None whatever," was the reply. Then, after a moment's reflection, he added : "But, I confess, if I had been a professor of theology, and if Jude and Peter had been among my students, and had given in these compositions as class exercises, I think that when I returned them I would have asked the lads to speak to me at the end of the hour." The other is the following : One day Mr Struthers quoted to the writer this verse from 2nd Samuel, which seems to refer to the latter part of David's reign when the king was growing old : "Then the men of David sware unto him saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Isreal." And he made this comment on the passage : Isn't that bonnie to call the king "the light of Isreal?" If David had lived in our country, the Scotch folk would not have been likely to say such a bonnie thing. They might rather have said, "You pit yersel' at the heid o' the airmv? Man, ye can scarcely staund on yer ain feet."

PULPIT WORK.

The people of his own congregation in Greenock know how attractive his pulpit-work was. And many strangers who visited the town for a few day found their way to the church in West Stewart Street. Mr Struthers put his best into his discourses—the best of his fine intellect and of his warm, emotional nature. The supreme subject of his preaching was the love of God in Christ. And how he “opened the Scriptures” to his people! Oftentimes one very brief comment of his upon a text would cast a flood of light upon it.

“THE MORNING WATCH.

The twenty-seven volumes of “The Morning Watch” will be an abiding memorial of his unique genius, his lofty character, and his literary skill. Happy are those lovers of “belles-lettres” who possess an entire set. For each volume is full of plums. I have heard the publication described as “A Juvenile Christian Punch.” Professor Denney, in contributing to an issue of the “British Weekly” at some time in the “nineties” his list of the Hundred Best Books, put in as the last of the hundred, “a volume of ‘The Morning Watch.’” When the present writer afterwards referred to this in conversation with Mr Struthers, the latter said that as soon as he read his friend’s list of books, he sent him a post-card with only these words written on the back of it, “Oh! Denney, Denney!”

The “Watch” made its editor widely known everywhere. Some people who lived “furth the kingdom” had in their minds this one and only point of interest in the Scottish seaport called Greenock, that Mr Struthers, the writer of “The Morning Watch,” lived there. The bright little monthly, enriched and adorned as it was with Mrs Struthers’s beautiful illustrations, has, alas! passed away with its editor. It was so unique in character, but no other mind could possibly cointinue it.

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

HIS CAREFULNESS.

Although our friend was constantly so genial, and so full of humour, there was also just a little bit of the ascetic in him. Sometimes he would gird himself to perform tasks of irksome drudgery, which were not for him to do at all. He told the writer that he had once spent two whole days in the printing-office correcting with the pen a misprint in a French phrase which occurred in part of an issue of his Magazine; and he had done so although it was impossible by this means to make the expression "perfectly" correct. The fact is that he not only felt it to be his duty to spend and be spent, in labouring to leave the world better than he found it, but that in doing so he exhausted his physical nature prematurely. He burned the candle of his life at both ends. He would never take a long and restful summer holiday. To the last also he loaded himself with toilsome periodical engagements outside of his congregational work. And thus his light has gone out far too soon.

DIED IN HARNESS.

John Paterson Struthers was a great Christian; and he has been taken from the service which he loved to his eternal reward. The manner of his passing was beautiful. He died in harness, as there can be no doubt he himself desired to do. He rests from his labours, and his works follow him. To those who possessed his friendship, that friendship was not only a privilege and an honour, but also a means of grace. And he will continue to live in the multitude of human souls that were influenced towards good by his Christian teaching and example.

"His memory long will live alone
In all our hearts, as mournful light
That broods above the fallen sun,
And dwells in heaven half the night."

ALL FOR QUIETNESS.

There is a certain amusing incident which comes to our mind at this time illustrative of the humility which at all times obsessed

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

Mr Struthers. He told us that he had been spending a week-end—it must have been one of those very few holidays he ever took—with one of his wealthy friends who lived in a big house at one of the Clyde watering-places. Naturally enough, Mr Struthers informed his friend by which steamer he might be expected, but was alarmed, and we can imagine it, to find when he did arrive, that a carriage and pair had been sent to meet him, along with a footman, who took charge of his modest luggage. Mr Struthers kept in the corner of the carriage, as much out of sight as possible, but determined there and then, as he afterwards told us, to get away from the house in a quieter manner. He mentioned that he intended leaving with a certain steamer on the Monday morning, and the response was that the carriage would be at the door in plenty of time. “But,” said Mr Struthers, with a quiet chuckle, “I left with an earlier boat and slipped quietly out of the house and down to the pier, and no one knew that I had gone!”

OUT AT 64.

Mr Struthers was an ardent lover of the game of cricket, and seldom missed being a spectator at Glen Park on Saturdays for many years, and the following incident will afford an illustration of the peculiar humour which so often delighted those who were privileged to be his companions on such occasions.

We forget how many years ago it was, but it is a good many; we had this privilege along with another well known Greenock citizen. We were seated on one of the forms watching a game in progress, and Mr Struthers was indulging himself in his quiet way as a spectator, and every now and again “coming away” with those quaint remarks of his. After one of the players had “run up” a tidy score and was retiring from the field amidst a volley of applause, Mr Struthers turned to us very solemnly and said, “I wonder, now, if the Patriarchs ever played cricket. If they did, would not a record of their scores be very interesting. It must be something like this: Noah, 44, caught out by Abraham; Esau, 0, caught out by Jacob; Isaac, l.b.w., and so on.” And then as an afterthought he added, “Methuselah, 999, not out.” And 64 saw

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

the end of Mr Struthers' innings! We wonder whether the friend with whom we sat in Glen Park along with Mr Struthers on that long past day will remember the occasion?

THE GREAT LITTLE BOOK.

It might have been expected that a man like Mr Struthers would have left behind him some literary work of outstanding merit. Yet, what do we find? Apart from the "Morning Watch," lectures and sermons, there is practically nothing else, for he was a busy man and had little time for special study. Yet we would not have it otherwise, for the twenty-six volumes of the "Morning Watch" show, as nothing else might do, the wide scope of his reading and the illuminating brilliancy and originality of his mind. A one-man show is often a poor affair, but here it is brilliant. And what do we have in these wonderful books? It would be easier to tell what we have not. We have salvation first and last; we have theology; we have fiction that will charm children so long as children are; we have nature stories; we have learning and information on many out-of-the-way subjects; and we also have the delightful illustrations, of which Mr Struthers was not the artist, but truly the inspiration. These were done by Mrs Struthers from the inception of the "Morning Watch," and are a loving tribute to his memory as well as the clever expression of the artist. The truest proof of the enduring permanence of these magazines is that anyone may pick up any of them, open it casually, and he at once will be arrested with whatsoever he has found and continue reading. He who has them has a golden treasury. At one time they were all in our possession, but a heart that is said to be kindly prompted the lending of them to friends until they mostly all went out and never were returned!

There are very many among us to whom the old town of Greenock will never be the same, now that it has lost the genial presence and gracious influence upon its life of that unique personality and saintly soul, John Paterson Struthers. For more than a generation he laboured at the heart of all our Christian activities, and in full view of his admiring and reverencing fellow-

townsmen. Every person of insight recognised him to be a genius, a seer, and a prophet of God.

HIS INATE HUMILITY.

To many ministers life is just one long holiday, with Monday as a special day of dissipation! Now this must not be taken for an ill-natured statement, for when we remember that the minister of the fashionable church has nothing more to do than preach two sermons a-week, which, as often as not, are written in half-an-hour on the Saturday evening, it cannot be considered that he is hard-worked. And we do not altogether blame the man, for we know full well that the members of many such churches do not want to see the minister at their houses during the week, believing that if they see him in the pulpit—occasionally—that is enough. But Mr Struthers was not one of these sort of men, and the Sabbath was to him perhaps the least strenuous day of the week. For him to have an evening at home was rare a blessed rest that he seldom obtained, for he was always at some meeting or other, or visiting in some house where his presence helped to clear away the shadows. And through the day the tale was just the same, for he was a constant visitor at the Infirmary and also at the Combination Fever Hospital. Thursday afternoon was the time of his weekly visit at the latter place, and often we met him plodding along the muddy Inverkip Road, when perhaps the minister of some other church would be driving in a cab. But such was the man. The weather never hindered him in carrying out his ministrations of mercy, and many a day when a hurricane would sweep down the Kip Valley, and when even the nurses found it desirable to forego their leave because of the weather, through all the storm would come Mr Struthers, with his cheery humour and his good tidings of great joy. And he did not merely visit at the beds where his acquaintances were, for every patient was a friend of Mr Struthers. Such tramps as this must have helped to shorten his life, but God made the weather and God knows best. And he did not prepare his body to withstand the rigours of the weather, for we have known him set forth for Glasgow and spend the whole day there, and the simple sandwich in his pocket and the glass of milk he bought was all his

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

sustenance. Foolish, very likely, but it was certainly not caused by meanness, for to Mr Struthers money was not a god to be worshipped, but merely a commodity which civilized people made use of as a means of exchange. He was certainly careful of money, and never scorned it, but he never sought after it, and many a time refused an increase in his salary from the congregation of his church. His people would have been proud had he taken the offer of a larger salary, but in his humility he persistently waived such offers aside, and would have none of it. Yet out of his modest stipend he gave with a lavish hand—even as did the widow with her mite—to the various schemes of the church and the legion of charities in which he took an interest. But our friend gave secretly, and his name was never found on any subscription list.

HIS WORTH FOR GOOD.

And so has passed early to his rest one of the goodliest of men that ever lived. And saintly Struthers is not an extreme adjective in this case. He was ever setting himself in the lowliest of places, and was always entreated to move up higher, and he would not. But the Lord of the Feast has taken him to a place amongst the elect, and his friends will rejoice exceedingly that his worth has been rewarded and he has come into his own. While he was amongst us, Mr Struthers was one of the most powerful agencies for good in Greenock, and even now when he has been called to be with his Master, his influence has not passed away. And it never will. He was such a man as daily sacrificed himself for others, and the glory of his life is an inspiration to us all; for goodness, humility, helpfulness, honesty, and worth were the characteristics of the man. And as a last word, may we recall the verse in the Bible that vividly portrays Mr Struthers: "Finally, brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." And think on Mr Struthers.

TWO STORIES

From "The Morning Watch."

1882.

St. Enoch's 2.5 train for Greenock. Passenger chooses empty compartment near engine! hoping to have a solid hour's work at a bagful of belated examination papers. Opens bag.

2.9, Shields Road; enter 2nd passenger. "Rain again! Wasn't last month awful Over 6 inches. But think of poor Greenock's 16! They say there was an Englishman once who asked a boy at Princes Pier if it always rained there, and the boy answered, 'Naw, sir, it sometimes snaws!' Ha! ha! Good story, eh?" Repeats it.

2.20, Paisley; enter 3rd passenger. "Very wet! It takes all one's philosophy to stand this kind of thing. Haven't we had a winter of it? They tell me Greenock had over 15 inches! Did you ever hear the story of the Englishman, etc.?" Tells it.

2.25, Elderslie; enter 4th passenger. "Disagreeable day! But nothing like last month. The papers say they had 15.82 inches in Greenock. There's a good yarn told about an Englishman." Tells it.

2.31, Houston; enter 5th passenger. "Weather broken again. These rain gauges have done a lot of overtime this while. Take Greenock, for example. But as the little boy said to the Englishman,' etc. Tells the story.

2.37, Bridge-of-Weir; enter 6th passenger. "My first day on the golf course for six weeks, and not a pleasant one! I wonder

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

how they do further down the way. They tell of an Englishman," etc. Tells the story, and as it is received in solemn silence, tells it again as he fears they have missed the point.

2.45, Kilmacolm: enter 7th passenger, farmer's buxom wife. "I'm sorry to come in all dripping this way. But you see we are that near Greenock! I was at a wedding the other night, and my cousin's man, a real comic, was making us all laugh at a story about an Englishman," etc. Tells it at great length. "Wasn't it real smart o' the laddie?" Tells it again.

2.55, Lynedoch Station: enter 8th passenger. "You've had a lot of rain evidently up the way! Did you ever hear——?"

Chorus of passengers: "Oh, yes, frequently!" "We've been hearing nothing else for thirty days and thirty nights!" "For pity's sake, don't!"

"Oh, but you don't know what I was going to say! There was an old Greenock minister long ago, and they had been deaving him with that story that I suppose you have been telling one another. And when the train stopped at Princes Pier, he said—'Ladies and gentleman, this is Greenock, and will you kindly take notice'—as I now ask you to do—that it is neither raining nor snowing; the streets and the platform are quite dry, and the sun has been shining all day!"

THE PEAT FIRE.

“Peats make a fine fire, nae doot, but they are the better of a bit coal among them. But, speaking of peats,” continued the old man, “minds me of a grand ploy we had when I was a boy at schule six-and-seventy years syne. In thae days we had a’ to tak a peat wi’ us every mornin’ in winter. Ye’ve heard tell o’ that, I daur say. Weel, oor maister, auld Mr Andrews, was a fine teacher and mony a grand scholar he turned oot. But he was a bit selfish; maybe I should say, inconseederate. He used to sit owre the fire sae close that naebody else got ony guid o’t. I wadna be sae sair on him noo as I was then, for an auld body’s bluid is gey thin. But it angered us to see him monopolisin’ the heat day after day, for it was an unco severe winter, and so twa three o’ us put oor heids thegither, and we chose an extra big peat and bored a hole in it and filled it wi’ some gunpouter that we bocht for a bawbee, and then we put the peat back among the iethers. But we keepit oor een on it, and when we saw it wad sune be its turn to gang on the fire we a’ began to sit as near the door as we could. So at last the maister lifted it and put it on, but it was hardly oot o’ his hands when there was a great pluff-f-f and then sic a stour o’ peat ash that we couldna see ane anither. But we a’ made for the plagrun’, and the maister, I tell ye, wasna the last! When the air was cleared he ordered us a’ back, and we could see he was in an awfu’ rage, and nae wonder, for we micht hae blinded him. It was a mercy the pouter wasna rammed hard. That was why it didna make as much noise as we expected when it exploded. He had jaloused at once what had been done, and says he, ‘Three liffes to every one of you, for now all knew about it if you didn’t do it.’ “Please, sir,” said what-d’ye-ca’-him!—him that rose to be Moderator o’ the General Assembly—“the lassies kenned nocht aboutit,” and when he said that, I jumpit up, for he was ane o’ the little ones, and I was ane o’ the biggest, and I said, “And

MEMORIES OF REV. J. P. STRUTHERS.

ye mauna thrash him for he tried to keep us frae daein' it." "Oh, indeed!" says the maister, "then it was you that did it?" "Maybe it was," says I. "Then hold out your hand, sir!" and he laid on me wi' 'a his micht. "That's for your impudence," says he and he gied me ten, and then he stoppit. Oh, but they were sair! I can feel them yet, ay, there's things that even seventy-six years dinna take the sting oot o'. But I didna cry, though I nearl' bit my lip off. You see the schule was a' lookin' on, and its eaw bein' a martyr when ve hae an admirin' cloud o' witnesses. By this time he had got his temper oot, and the rest got only ane a piece. Nelly Graham, her that was afterwards my wife, walked wi me to the cross roads that afternoon, and neither o' us said anything, but when we were partin' she iust said 'It was gey sair, was it no?' And then I broke down. Ay, it was sair, but it was worth it, mair ways than one!"

* * * * *

"How long were you married?" I asked. "Six years and twa months. And it will be fifty-five years come the first o' May since she was taen awa. Av, there was mair than the pouter kindled that day in the auld schule hoose. But it never gaed oot. And it never will"

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